

The Hammondasset River defines the entire eastern border of the Town of Madison and is named for the Indian tribe that populated what is now present day Madison/Canton. The Hammondassets were typical Eastern Woodland Indians. They were mostly farmers, subsisting mainly on corn, beans, and squash, but they also fished and hunted. The Indian word "Hammondasset" means, "where we dig holes in the ground", and refers to the place where they farmed along the River.

Photo by the Madison Land Conservation Trust



The remains include the fieldstone ruins of the mill complex, stone-lined head and tail-races, the dam and at least two associated structures. Further along the trail—several stone walls mark old field borders, indicating that the forest here developed on land formerly tilled or pastured. Along the west bank of the river, the second-growth forest contains oaks (red, black, white, and chestnut), beech, black and yellow birches, white ash, and red maple. A few sugar maples and sassafras occur and some large sycamores grow along the river banks. As the trail approaches Wickford Place, it follows an old logging road, then goes right along steep slopes, and crosses some temporary stream beds, before climbing up-slope and along a narrow right-of-way between private residences. The loop trail often offers sights of red-shouldered hawks and many woodpeckers. Barred owls also nest in this area.

This 2-3 mile trail includes the site of a historic mill, wonderful close and distant views of the Hammondasset River and its broad flood plain, and an upland loop that circumscribes the valley of a lovely tributary system. Four access points allow walks of varying lengths and sections of the trail. Adjacent to the entrance of the trail at Fawn Brook Circle, the foundation ruins of the Hammondasset Paper Mill and its dam can be seen towards the right next to the river. The Hammondasset Mill site is included in the National Register of Historic Places. It was built around 1865 to produce straw board, a product used for making boxes which was popular during an interim period between the heydays of rag-based and wood pulp-based papers. The mill was successful until its closing in 1890. In later years, the site was occupied by a lumber operation.

Directions and Parking:

This trail is best reached from Durham Road (Route 79) to Horse Pond Road and east on Green Hill Road to Fawn Brook Circle. Parking is near trail heads on Fawn Brook Circle and Green Hill Road.

Permitted Activities:

The trails areas in the MLCT properties are for hiking only. Dogs are allowed, but must be leashed. Please pick up all animal waste.

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The descriptive information for this trail is excerpted from the MLCT's Madison Trails Guide.

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